

K Balch (N.)
LETTERS

From the

4182.e.11.

First Church in *Glocester* to the second in *Brad-*
ford, with their **A N S W E R S.**

To which is added,

An APPENDIX,

Containing the *Result* of the COUNCIL
at *Bradford*, and Mr. BALCH's *Reply*
to the *Articles* of Error alledg'd against
him, laid before said COUNCIL.

Judg. xix. 30. *And it was so, that all that saw it, said, There was no such Deed done nor seen, from the Day that the Children of Israel came up out of the Land of Egypt unto this Day: Consider of it, take Advice, and speak your Minds.*

Duæ sunt Res, *Conscientia et Fama*: *Conscientia* necessaria est tibi; *Fama* Proximo tuo. Qui, fidens *Conscientiæ* suæ, negligit *Famam* suam, crudelis est: Maximè in Loco isto positus, de quo dicit Apostolus scribens ad Discipulum suum, *Per omnia Teipsum præbens Exemplar bonorum Operum.*

AUGUSTIN. *ad Fratres in Erema.*

BOSTON, Printed by Rogers and Fowle, for. J. Edwards in
Cornhill. 1744.

LETTERS

First Chapter in Geography to be read in Day
Book and the 1st & 2nd

ALB. A. P. D. I.

Containing the 1st of the
Book and the 1st & 2nd
to the 1st of the 1st
but not before



But not before
the 1st of the 1st
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INTRODUCTION.

Bradford, East-Precinct, Sept. 11. 1744.

LAST Evening, the Rev. Mr. *John White* with his two Ruling-Elders and a Deacon (representing as we suppose the first Church in *Glocester*) came into the Parish, and were entertained at the House of One, who has not only separated from us ever since his return from *Newbury*, (now a twelve-month since, excepting one Sabbath when he professedly came to see what he could catch) but was there also, by common report, a chief Promoter of the Separations and Divisions that have so much abounded in that Town. This Morning they passed by my House in their Way to the Meeting-House; but finding no Body there, and the Doors shut; the Rev. Mr. *White* dispatch'd away one of his Elders and the Deacon to my House, with a Message acquainting me, that Mr. *White* was at the Meeting House, waiting to speak with me. I ask'd them, if he was in the Meeting House? It was said, No. If the Doors were open? It was said, No. I then reply'd, it would look odd for me to go and hold a Conference with Mr. *White* in the Street; but if he, and the Gentlemen that were with him, would come to my House, I was free to wait upon them. It was then said, that if I went, perhaps the Doors might be opened. I reply'd, I had no Business with that; the Church had voted nothing about it; and the Parish, I perceiv'd, would not have the Doors open'd that Day. It was then said, If I did not see Cause to go to the Meeting House, Mr. *White* desir'd I would send him a Copy of the Proceedings of the Church. I reply'd, this was more extraordinary still; we had laid our Proceedings before a Council of Neighbour Churches, who had assisted us with their best Advice: And tho' we stood ready to give an Account of our *Publick Actions* to any Sister Church, *orderly* enquiring into them; yet if Mr. *White* was come in the *third Way of Communion*, as we supposed from his Letters; we conceived we were not liable to a Process *in that Way*: We therefore desir'd to know, in what Character they were come, and upon what Business, before we laid any of our Proceedings before them, further than we had done in our Letters to that Church. Upon this it was said, they did not come to dispute with me, but to deliver a Message; and I desir'd they would likewise deliver mine to Mr. *White*, and so they went off. After this, (as I learn

INTRODUCTION.

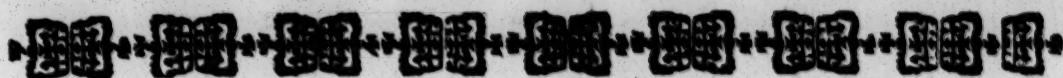
by others) informing Mr. *White* of what had passed, they all took Horse and repaired to the House of another of our aggriev'd Brethren, (who is under the Displeasure of this Church for his very ill Conduct ever since the Beginning of these Times) where they spent the Day, in what Business and to what Purpose, *Time will bring forth*. But I thought proper to notify the Publick of thus much, as the Occasion of our Publishing what follows. As to which, I would only further observe, that in our Letters to the first Church in *Glocester*, we considered her as a Sister Church, our Equal, without Regard to the great Seniority of her Pastor: which we could not think gave her a Right to lord it over us, or made it our Duty to suppress our just Resentments of so ill Usage.

As to the Result of the Council, which we have given to the Publick in the Appendix, it will speak for it self: As it was refer'd to in our Letters, we tho't it proper it should accompany them into the World. I would only say, we took a whole Body of Ministers without picking and chusing; and those whom we think our Constitution particularly, as well as the Nature and Reason of Things, pointed us to.

And as to my Replies to the several Articles of Error alledg'd against me; as they are refer'd to in the Result, and as those Articles of Error have made a great Noise; I thought I could not be just to myself or others, should I any longer suppress the Publication of them. They are, as they were laid before the Church and Council, without Alteration. Only I would say, that when those Articles were brought to me in a preparatory Paper, with a Desire that I would lay them before the Church, there were two or three others along with them; to which I likewise prepar'd an Answer, and read it to the Church with the Answers here given, at our first Church Meeting: But when it appear'd, upon the bringing in of their Testimonies for the Support of their Articles, that there was not one Word for the Support of several of them, I did not think it proper after this to trouble, either the Church or the Council, with my Answers to those Things: Which is likewise the Reason why they are now left out. I am also unwilling to be over-burdenom to a very small Parish, which has been, and may probably yet be put to a very considerable Charge upon these Accounts. We hope the Friends to Truth and Liberty will be ready to assist us, as there shall be Occasion, in pleading the Cause of both: Which will be a great Obligation upon their

Unworthy Humble Servant

William Balch.



The first LETTER.

Glocester, July 2. 1744.

The first Church of CHRIST in *Glocester* wisheth
to the second Church in *Bradford* Grace,
Mercy and Peace.

Reverend, Honoured and Beloved,

HAVING received a Letter from no less than Nine Brethren of your Church and Parish, who are very uneasy and aggrieved at the Conduct of the Pastor, the Rev. Mr. *William Balch*; as well as of the Fraternity of said Church, more especially on the Account of said Mr. *Balch's* propagating Doctrines not agreeing with the Doctrines of the Gospel; and with the Confession of the Faith of these Congregational Churches: As also, their Uneasiness arises from the Conduct of their Church; who instead of testifying against said Doctrines, did by their Votes suspend several of the aggrieved Brethren for accusing said Pastor, and for being Witnesses in the Case, which Suspension they still remain under. And the said second Church neglect proper Means for the convicting said Pastor of his Errors: And therefore have applied to us for Relief according to what is prescribed in the Platform, viz. in the third Way of Communion, by Way of Admonition. We the first Church have taken the said Complaint under Consideration, and come to this Result, to take the sorrowful Case of the Complainants under our Cognizance, and have chosen our Rev. Pastor, Elders, and another worthy Member to represent us; and in our Name to begin and carry on the Process (we hope) to a final and happy Issue. We apprehend that one Church has no Authority over another, for they are equal. And we are as far from thinking you look upon your selves to be independent, and unaccountable. For this was a Principle that the eminent Leaders in the congregational Way abhorred; however, one Church may be helpful to another to point out to them the Way of Peace and Truth. We look upon this Way of Communion the only regular Way of Relief to the
Aggrieved

Aggrieved, in case the Church to whom they stand related don't see Cause to relieve them. But we should heartily rejoice, if it might be made up in a little Time as some have imagined ; and the whole adjusted without putting our selves and you to the Trouble and Charge of coming. In Hopes of it we will give Time. And now we further signify to you, dear Brethren, unless we are happily prevented by your signifying that all Matters of Controversy are adjusted, our said Pastor and Delegates will be with you on the third Tuesday of *August* next ensuing the Date hereof, and we desire you would respectfully meet them at your Meeting-House on said Day, or at a more convenient Place you shall appoint, at Nine o'Clock, to enquire into the Matters of Complaint, that they may proceed in said Affair as the Rule directs.

Your Brethren in the Faith and Fellowship of the Gospel,

John White, Pastor.

In the Name and by the Consent of the Church.

The ANSWER.

Bradford, Aug. 6. 1744.

The second Church of CHRIST in *Bradford* to the first in *Glocester*, sends Greeting.

Reverend, Honoured and Beloved,

WE received yours of the 2d of *July* on the 9th of the same, in which you signify your Intention of making us a Visit in the third Way of Communion, viz. by Way of Admonition ; occasion'd by a Letter of Complaint to you from a Number of our Brethren ; a Copy of which we think you shou'd have sent us, instead of that loose and general Account you have only given us in yours ; for if they have represented Things to you as you seem to intimate, their Information is utterly wrong, as may easily be made to appear by our Church Records, and a Multitude of Witnesses : But as you have not given your selves the Trouble to send us a Copy of their Complaint, we think we are fairly excus'd the Trouble of sending you a Copy of our Votes, or any Testimonies in the Case.

However, we cannot but observe, that tho' in the close of your Letter you say, you are coming " to enquire into Matters of Complaint,"

Complaint," yet you all along write, as if you had already made your Judgment, or were at least disposed to think the worst of us, and best of our complaining Brethren. How is it otherwise, in the first Place, that you so exaggerate their Number? "A Letter, you say, from no less than Nine Brethren." Is *Nine* so great a Number to be uneasy in a Church and Parish, in the present divided, distracted Times? Have not you your selves had three times that Number uneasy in your own Church and Parish for many Years past? And is there a Church in the Province, in which fewer are uneasy on one Account or another, in the present Day? We are perswaded, the Instances are rare; and we are not ignorant who, and what, have been the Occasion of stirring up so general a Strife. We bless GOD there is a far greater Measure of Peace and Unanimity among us, than in most other Places in the Land; notwithstanding all the Attempts that, for several Years past, have been made by ill-minded Men, to break and divide us. And this has hitherto been the great Objection against us, That our Peace was such as not to be disturbed, and our Firmness to the Pastor, and one another, not to be violated; 'till you at length have made this great Discovery, that no less than Nine of our Church and Parish are uneasy. Dear Brethren, look at home, or look into any and every Church and Parish between you and us; and we are perswaded you will not then lay such Strefs upon the Number of the Uneasy, as your manner of Expression evidently does.

Again, you speak of the Complainants, as if you thought them wronged, and in a sorrowful Condition; and of the Church, as if you thought her cruel and arbitrary. "We look upon this Way of Communion (say you) as the only regular Way of *Relief* to the Aggriev'd, in case the Church to whom they stand related, don't *see Cause* to relieve them." It seems then they must have Relief, their Case is so bad; and it being questionable whether the Church would *see Cause* to relieve them, you were obliged to take the Measures you are pursuing. But do you indeed, Brethren, know the Case of the Aggrieved? Have you heard both Sides? Why then such Epithets "The sorrowful Case of the Complainants? And why do you speak of the Aggrieved as if they must be relieved, either by you, in this Method, or by their own Church? May not their Case be such as to admit of Relief only from themselves? Or from the Grace of GOD, touching and changing their Hearts? May there not be a Disposition and hearty Willingness in the Church to relieve them, if it was in her Power?

er? Why then do you speak of her not seeing Cause to do it, as if the Fault must lay there? Or if you certainly know this to be the Case, and are at no loss about it in your own Minds, from the Information you have already had, why do you yet speak in the close of your Letter of coming *to enquire*, and not rather to reprove and admonish. We pray that you would endeavour to understand your selves, and to know what it is you are coming upon.

Again, we observe, that though you seem so much to countenance the Representation made to you by the Aggriev'd, and no where intimate as if you could not possibly believe the Pastor of this Church was propagating Doctrines contrary to the Doctrines of the Gospel, and the Brethren conniving at him therein, and instead of testifying against said Errors, by their Votes suspending divers for doing it; (we say though you no where intimate this) yet in another Instance your Charity towards us abounds, and you say "we are far from thinking you look upon yourselves to be independent and unaccountable. Pray why not, as well as that we should be erroneous in far greater Matters? Your Charity here, Brethren, looks something suspicious; and the Reason you give, "For this was a Principle that the eminent Leaders in the Congregational Way abhorred" has very little Strength or Propriety in it, as used in this Place. For may not they who are supposed to have departed from those eminent Leaders in Points of *Faith*, be supposed to have departed from them too in Points of *Discipline*? Or are these *latter* of so much greater Importance, and so much less liable to Dispute, that though you can easily believe the *former* of us, yet you can't possibly admit the *latter*? Brethren, we are not to be flatter'd or threaten'd into a Submission to any Thing we judge unwarrantable, or, even from our Attachment to Congregationalism, to be drawn in to approve of any Misapplication of its Principles.

Again, though in the Close of your Letter you tell us, you are coming to enquire into Matters of Complaint, yet in the Body you assure us, "You are already come to a Result, not only to begin, but to carry on the Process, (viz. a Process with us in the third Way of Communion) to a final Issue." Now this we think very unseasonably brought out. Is it not possible that, upon Enquiry, you might find, there were no just Grounds so much as to begin a Process with us? Or if there was sufficient Reason to admonish us, yet if under Admonition we are penitent and re-form,

form, must you still go further ? Why then do you threaten us (for we can look upon it as no other) with going through ; while as yet you are professedly coming but to enquire into the Matters of Complaint, i. e. to see whether there is any Reason for your being offended with us, and admonishing us, yea or no ?

Again, you tell us, “ you shou’d heartily rejoice if our Differences might be made up in a little Time, and in Hopes of it you will give us Time ;” and so you allow us six or seven Weeks for the Business ; a Fortnight or three Weeks of which is taken up in the passing of Letters between us. And do you think, Brethren, that the remaining Month of the most busy Season in all the Year, is a *large Allowance* for the adjusting of so many and such great Matters ? And yet you give us to understand, “ That unless you are happily prevented by our signifying to you that all Matters of Controversy are adjusted, you will be with us at the Time.” *All Matters of Controversy!* Why, Brethren, we think that in so bad a State of Things as ours is represented to be, you should rejoice if but one *one half* might be rectified : But it seems that unless every Thing is adjusted exactly to your Mind, or if there be any one Thing left, that you can possibly lay hold on, you are resolv’d not to let slip the Opportunity of favouring us with your Discipline. Why so severe Brethren ? Why so rigid in your Justice ? Is it because there is no other Church in the Land, where there is any Thing amiss ? Or where there is any possible Room for the Practice of the third Way of Communion, upon the Account of any Errors or Disorders whatever ? We desire but to be impartially dealt with. And we pray that you would look around you, and see what is to be done : only first *cast out the Beam out of your own Eye that you may see clearly.* But Brethren, if we have done any Thing that can be thought our Duty for the adjusting of our Differences, must we yet be liable to Admonition, only because we fail of Success, i. e. because we have unreasonable Men to deal with ? And upon this Head, we would inform you that we have neither neglected, nor been slow in proceeding to make Use of all such Means as have been in our Power, for the removing and healing such unhappy Divisions as have arisen amongst us. We have had Church-Meeting after Church-Meeting, when every Thing that has been brought to the Pastor has been fairly laid before the Church, and Things have been managed, as with Order and Decency, on the one Hand, so with great Calmness and

Moderation on the other. Nor have we refused to consult with other Churches : But because we wou'dn't lean to our own Understanding, and would shew no Want of Mercy or Faithfulness in seeking to bind up the Breaches and Wounds of the Church and Brethren, we have had an Ecclesiastical Council of Neighbour Churches (as our Constitution directs) upon the Spot : Who after a full hearing of both Sides, and a thorough Examination of Matters, have approved of the Conduct of this Church, both in signifying themselves *offended* with a Number of their Members, and *not at all hurt in their Charity* towards their Pastor, by the Articles of Error alledg'd against him ; as may appear by their Result, a Copy of which we have herewith transmitted to you. If therefore, Brethren, you persist in your Resolution of going into a Process with us in the 3d Way of Communion, we think you must do it in Defiance of those very Principles upon which you profess to act. For the *Platform*, (we would presume you very well know) prescribes this Way of Communion only in Case a *Church, rent with Divisions among themselves, or lying under some open Scandal, shall yet refuse to consult with other Churches for the removing or healing the same.* We therefore pray, you would examine the Matter well ; and reconsider the Result, which you tell us, you came to : For if notwithstanding all that we have done, and now signified to you, you will yet be at the Trouble and Charge of coming to us *in this Way*, (flying in the very Face of that only Constitution upon which it is founded) we assure you, we shall not make ourselves in the least Sharers therein.

From your Brethren in the Faith and Fellowship of the Gospel,

William Balch.

In the Name and by the Consent of the Church.

P. S. Brethren, this Church is dissatisfied with the Conduct of the first Church in *Glocester*, more particularly with your receiving Papers from the Aggriev'd, which they have never yet laid before this Church, and with your giving out Copies of them, before you have yet so much as enquired into our Affairs ; besides what we have above expressed in this our Letter to you : To all which we wait your Answer.

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The second LETTER.

Glocester, August 14. 1744.

The first Church of CHRIST in *Glocester* to the
second Church in *Bradford* sendeth greeting.

Rev. Honored, and Beloved,

WE have received yours, and as you expect an Answer, take it (we pray you) in what follows.

By your Subtlety we were almost led out of the Way of Duty, into an impertinent, and unprofitable, yea endless Disputation. But discerning the Snare, we have happily escaped it. Ye err Brethren in thinking that we flattered, or threatned you to bring you to a Submission to our Enquiry. For we are not solicitous about what is your Duty; 'tis enough for us to know and do our own. We would have you to know, that 'tis not your Part or Province to judge whether we regularly enter into the Process; and come to a right Resolve or Result therein; but such as are called in to take the second Step are to do that Part, before they join us in the Process. And if you throw yourselves into a State of Independency, and refuse to lay Matters of Complaint before us; or to submit to an Enquiry, you must answer it to the Churches, and expose your selves to the Sentence of Non-Communion. Such is the Scituation of the Affairs of the Aggrieved, that they can't rationally expect their Restoration to Gospel Privileges but in this Method. And it is apparent, that there is no Stone left unturn'd to oppose the Practice of it; but humbly depending upon the Grace of God for Conduct, Courage and Success, we resolve to attend our Duty. Several Things serve to create Jealousies, that your Rev. Pastor is corrupt in his Principles. He seems to oppose their being brought to Light. The Votes of the Church seem to be shaped to secret them, as we learn by the Result of the late Council. And more especially his printed Sermon, wherein he attempts to reconcile the Apostles *Paul* and *James*. 'Tis dangerous (beyond what we can express) for the Leaders of this People to be mislead. 'Tis melancholly to observe an Inclination in Ministers and Churches to

forfake the found Principles of the Reformation ; The Principles of the good old Puritans, as well as the Principles of the first Planters of this Wildernefs.

New-England's Glory will depart in our departing from the Faith of thefe Churches. We defire you therefore (Brethren) without any further Difpute or Reluctancy, to meet our fore-mention'd Delegates at your Meeting Houfe, in order to their enquiring into Matters of Complaint, the fecond *Tuesday* of *September* next, at Nine o'Clock Forenoon, which will be the 11th Day of faid Month ; and therein we will endeavour to ferve your beft Interests. Defiring an Interest in your Prayers, we reft your Brethren

In the Faith and Fellowship of the Gospel,

John White Pastor.

In the Name and with the Consent of the Church.

The ANSWER.

Bradford, Sept. 3. 1744.

The fecond Church of CHRIST in *Bradford* to the firft in *Glocefter* fends greeting.

Rev. Honored, and Beloved,

YOURS of the 14th of *August* came not to our Hands, 'till the 27th. So that, though the firft Opportunity has been taken to inform the Church of your Letter, and we have met upon it as foon as poffible ; yet, unlefs ours to you is conveyed with more Care and Speed than yours has been to us, it is not like to reach you 'till near a Week after the Day you have again appointed to be with us : *You are fo impatient to be upon Buſinefs.* Is this giving Time, as you propos'd in your firft Letter ? When either through Design or Negligence, we have not the fame allow'd us for a Reply, which you take to give us Information. But we are well enough aware, you did not defire a Reply : You intend, it feems, to do your Buſinefs without difputing, i.e. " inafmuch as you are infallible, and can't miſs it in any Thing, all Endeavours to fet, or keep you right, are ſuperfluous ;

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ous ; you will do just as you please, and desire others would not be so officious as to examine your Conduct, though they are ever so much concerned in it ; nor expect a Reason for any Thing you do." What *Spirit* does this breathe ? Have not the *Times* a little perverted your Judgment ?

We had writ to you our Exceptions to several Things in your Letter : and in the Close of ours, had offered sufficient Light to have convinced you, (as we doubt not, it will all the Country besides) *that we were in no wise liable to a Process in the third Way of Communion.* This you call "*Subtlety* and a Snare to draw you into an impertinent, unprofitable, yea, endless Dispute." Brethren, if you can give no rational Account of yourselves in the Particulars excepted to, we can't blame you so much for thinking, it was *subtle* in us to put you upon doing that, which you know you cannot do ; but we meant no more, in this Case, than honestly to mind you of your Mistakes, in Hopes you would frankly own and retract them, without going into an endless Dispute. And how you should esteem this a *Snare* laid for you, and yourselves *happy in discerning and escaping it*, we are at a Loss to conceive ; unless you are determined not to be made sensible of your Duty ; and wou'd think yourselves got into a most unhappy Condition, should Conviction be obtruded upon you. We are afraid, you are not yet sensible of the real Snare ; instead of happily discerning and escaping it, as you say, it seems to us, and we believe all the World will judge, you have entangled your selves more than ever. We wish you had honest Subtlety enough to get out of the Entanglement. And that you could truly say, *The Snare is broken, and we are escaped.*

You tell us, "we err in thinking you flattered or threatned us to bring us to a Submission to your Enquiry ;" but you don't tell us, how those Passages in your Letter, which we looked upon as sometimes flattering, and then threatening us, ought to have been otherwise taken : And the Reason you give, why they can in no wise be so taken, is surprizing. "For we are not solicitous (say you) about what is your Duty, 'tis enough for us to know and do our own."

We confess, had you said this in Vindication of your staying at Home, and minding your own proper Business, it might have been taken in a good Sense ; but to give it as a Reason why you could not be supposed to flatter or threaten us to bring us to a Submission to your Enquiry, is the most exceptionable Thing in
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the World. For so the Sense of it must stand thus, “ no Brethren, you are utterly mistaken : we were so far from being dispos’d to use any such Methods with you to bring you to your Duty, that we are not at all solicitous about what your Duty is, or whether you do it or no ; we only mind our own.” To say this when you are professedly coming to admonish us, i. e. to point out our Duty, and impress it upon us ; could any Thing have been thought of, more out of the Way, more inconsistent and self-contradictory ? If you are not solicitous about what is our Duty, pray what are you solicitous about ? Is it by your Subtlety to draw us into a Snare ? Is it to lead us out of the Way of our Duty, and bring us to restore the Aggrieved without an Acknowledgment of their Faults ? Or is it to set the Aggrieved at Liberty without any Regard to us, or our Duty in that Matter ? Let us entreat you, Brethren, to tell us, why you are using these Measures with us, if you are not solicitous about what is our Duty, if it be not to point out to us the Way of Truth and Peace, as you profess in your former Letter. And can you point out our Duty in these Respects, without being solicious about what it is ? Can you impress a Sense of our Duty in a due Manner upon us, when you have let us know, you care so little whether we comply with it or not ? Nay, where is your Care and Charity for a Sister Church, erring from the Truth, and straying out of the Way ? And must it not render you forever inexcusable in taking any further Measures with us ? For will not the World be ready to believe you, and to think the Truth too unwarily dropt from you, and that you have really something else in View than either our Duty, or your own ? If we judge wrong in this Particular, as you have led us into the Snare yourselves, you cannot be so unkind as to refuse to set us right.

Your next Period is yet more extraordinary, “ We would have you to know (say you) that ’tis not your Part or Province to judge whether we regularly enter into the Process, and come to a right Resolve or Result therein ; but such as are called in to take the second Step, are to do that Part before they join us in the Process.” We reply, ’tis true indeed, such as are called in to take the second Step, are to judge for *themselves* before they join in the Process ; and are to judge particularly whether an Admonition has been regularly and rightfully dispensed before they agree in setting it on, or in *seconding the Admonition formerly given*, as
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the Phrase is in the *Platform*. But what then ? Is this a Proof that the Church, with whom the Process is had, is not to judge for her self too ? Are they who take the second Step to judge for themselves and for every Body else ? Can they be thought to be Judges for the Church, even while the first Step is taking, before they know any Thing of the Matter ? As to entering regularly into the Process, the Words of the Synod are express, that Churches are to maintain Unity and Peace “ by giving Account one to another of their public Actions, when it is ORDERLY desired.”† If then you expect we should submit to your Enquiry upon other Terms, you look for too much, and can’t answer it. And if the Church may not judge whether a right Resolve or Result be come into by the Church that admonishes her, how shall she know whether it be her Duty to take the Admonition or to reject it ? Must she take it whether it be right or wrong, or which is all one, without being allowed to judge in the Case ?

You go yet upon your old mistaken Foundation, that the Process once begun must be carried through, and all the Steps be taken. We said enough in our former Letter to have convinced you of this Mistake, had you attended to it. We again demand, ought not the Church if she be sensible she is rightfully admonish’d, to be humble and penitent under it ; and so by Reformation to prevent the second Step’s being taken with her ? And must she not then judge whether she is rightfully admonish’d yea or no ? What do you say to this, Brethren ? We expect your Answer, yea, we challenge it, and you will violate the Communion of Churches if you refuse to take Notice of us when thus *orderly enquiring into your publick Actions*. Before we dismiss this Head, we must ask you, are you sensible where you have got ? Even into the Heart and Bowels of Popery : For the Pope himself never demanded more of those he was concerned with, than that they should blindly submit to his Dictates and Dealings with them, without judging whether they were right or wrong. With how ill a Grace then do you presently speak of the Principles of the Reformation, and lament the sad Case of those Ministers and Churches who seem inclin’d to forsake them ? Dear Brethren, we must again admonish you to look at Home. Did ever a Protestant Church before make such a Demand, as you have here done ! “ You would have us to know
that

† 90th Page of the late Edition.

that we are not to judge of your Proceedings with us, whether they are right or wrong ; that is not our Part or Province, but to submit." We scorn your Words ; nor is there a Church in the Country that is not inclin'd to forsake the Principles of the Reformation, but would do the same. And if you consider'd how obnoxious you must hereby render your selves to all your Sister Churches, in thus aspiring to the *Popedom* over them, you would certainly be ashamed. And yet you go on to tell us, that " if we throw our selves into a State of Independency, and refuse to lay Matters of Complaint before you, or submit to an Enquiry, we must answer it to the Churches, and expose ourselves to the Sentence of Non-Communion." Brethren, we wou'd have you to know in your Turn, that we can easily do this, that we are not at all concern'd about answering to the Churches for our not yielding a tame Submission to so lordly a Power assumed over us. And do you think, that you can answer it ; and that the Churches will not hold themselves concerned to check so much Insolence, to crush the Cockatrice in the Egg, and prevent your riding over them all ? Most certainly you will alarm the Country, and draw upon your selves the Odium that is due.

Again, You tell us, " Such is the Scituation of the Affairs of the Aggriev'd, that they can't rationally expect their Restoration to Gospel-Priviledges, but in this Method." This perhaps may be a Clue to your whole Letter ; you are not solicitous about what is the Church's Duty ; whether she ever knows it, or does it, you care not ; but the Dear Aggriev'd must be restored to Gospel Privileges : and this they can't rationally expect without your Help. What ! not by owning their Faults and promising Amendment ? And can you answer for your encouraging them to expect it in any other way ? Has not the Sentence of the Church with respect to them (which was not rashly and hastily given) been approved of by an Ecclesiastical Council of Neighbour-Churches, consisting of as wise and able Men, as any your Church (without the least Disparagement may it be spoken) can produce ; and this after a Hearing of both Sides, and mature Deliberation ? And is not this enough to open your Eyes, and give you some Suspicion, that the Aggrieved may have misbehaved themselves ? Will you still listen to private Stories in opposition to such strong Evidence ? Consider Prov. 18. 13. *He that answereth a Matter before he heareth it, it is Folly and Shame*

to him. And we cannot but recommend to you one Text more, it is Prov. 26. 17. *He that passeth by and medleth with Strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a Dog by the Ears.* This is the unhappy Snare (Brethren) you are got into. You have given both Ears to one Side of the Question, and have intermeddled in an Affair that does not belong to you. *The Neighbourhood is sufficient for it.* But to return, the Aggrieved (you say) can't rationally expect their Restoration to Gospel-Privileges but in this Method ; " And it is apparent that there is no Stone left unturned to oppose the Practice of it," i. e. the Practice of the third Way of Communion. And ought we not to turn every Stone, i. e. to do every thing, not to be exposed to a just Censure in that Way ? And we challenge you and all the World, to mention any one thing we have done to oppose the Practice of it, any otherwise than by being careful not to deserve, or leave our selves liable to an Admonition. At this you seem to be angry. Would you have us, Brethren, to transgress the Laws of GOD and of right Reason, merely for the Sake of giving you the Pleasure to admonish us ? How unreasonable ! " But (you proceed) humbly depending upon the Grace of God for Conduct, Courage and Success, we resolve to attend our Duty," i. e. to admonish us whether we deserve it or not. Brethren, we pity your Case : and pray GOD to shew you your Duty, and to restrain that blind Zeal which wou'd kindle such a Fire in the Country, as perhaps it has never yet felt.

" Several Things (you say) serve to create Jealousies that your Rev. Pastor is corrupt in his Principles. He seems to oppose their being brought to Light. The Votes of the Church seem to be shaped to secrete them, as we learn by the Result of the late Council. And more especially, his printed Sermon wherein he attempts to reconcile the Apostles *Paul* and *James*." And Brethren, if we shou'd use the same Arguments to create Jealousies with respect to your Rev. Pastor's Principles ; that they are very probably corrupt, because he seems to oppose their being bro't to Light, and has never yet had the third Way of Communion practic'd upon him ; that the Votes of your Church profoundly secrete them, for we don't learn what they are by any one Vote, your Church ever passed ; and more especially his printed Works, wherein he has not been so good as to inform us of one half of the corrupt Doctrines, which we suspect he holds ; what would you think of it ? Know then, that the Brethren of this

Church equally despise the same Arguments, when brought to create Jealousies of their Pastor's Unsoundness ; and that all Mankind must despise them, when brought, as they are in your Letter, to prove, that he is not willing his Principles should be known. He lays his Principles before the Church in the most free and open Manner ; he lays them before an ecclesiastical Council ; and is from Time to Time publishing such Discourses of his, as are desired for the Press ; and all this to secrete his Principles, and because he is not willing they should be bro't to Light ! For Shame Brethren, don't impose upon yourselves (you can impose upon no Body else) by such Reasonings.

Again, you observe, " 'Tis dangerous (beyond what we can express) for the Leaders of the People to be mislead." To this we heartily subscribe, and hereupon condole the sorrowful Case of the first Church in *Glocester*. " 'Tis melancholly (you say) to observe an Inclination in Ministers and Churches to forsake the sound Principles of the Reformation." Ah ! Poor Church of *Glocester* ! How do our Bowels yearn for thee ? †

" *New-England's* Glory (you say) will depart in our departing from the Faith of these Churches." And we add, or in our departing from the Order and Discipline of these Churches, so as to practice in direct Opposition to those wholesome Rules, which not only the good old Puritans and the first Settlers of this Country, but which the Holy Scriptures themselves have laid down, and right Reason demands a most sacred Observance of.

And now you desire us without any more ado to meet you at Time and Place, and you will endeavour to serve our best Interests." Brethren, if you have a good Will to serve us, we thank you for it ; but after so many Proofs of a weak Head and strong Prejudices as you have given us, we must be excused, if we let you know, we cannot depend upon your Assistance : We will be fully content only with your Prayers. And so wishing your Love may abound yet more and more in Knowledge and in all Judgment,

We rest your Brethren in the Faith and Fellowship of the Gospel,

William Balch, Pastor.

In the Name and at the Desire of the Church.

* 'Tis evident you intended these Passages for us ; but we cannot see why they are not equally applicable to yourselves.

P. S. Brethren, if you give us Trouble in the Way you propose, we shall immediately send to the Press, these Letters, that the World may judge whether you do not treat us in an arbitrary, imperious Manner. Be therefore advis'd by 2 Kings 14. 10. *Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine Heart hath lifted thee up : Glory of this and tarry at Home : for why shouldst thou meddle to thine Hurt?*——We likewise put you in Mind that we shall expect Satisfaction in the Particulars we have specified in this and our former Reply to you. For this Church has renewed her Vote of Dissatisfaction with your Conduct.

The APPENDIX.

The RESULT of the COUNCIL at *Bradford*, *August 1st. 1744.*

WE the Pastors and Delegates of the first Church of Christ in *Andover*, the first in *Bradford*, the fourth and second in *Newbury*, the first in *Metbuen*, the first and second in *Haverhil*, the second in *Boxford*, being conven'd in an Ecclesiastical Council by Letters missive from the second Church in *Bradford*, to hear and judge of their Conduct, respecting a Number of their Members, professing themselves dissatisfied, with the Principles of their Rev. Pastor, as being erroneous ; and with the Church's Transactions thereon,

Having first earnestly sought of GOD, in Prayer, the Direction of his concurring Spirit, proceeded to consider what said Church had to lay before us. And after a publick hearing of both Parties in the Meeting House, and mature Deliberation had thereupon, it is the Opinion of this Council,

I. That this Church had Reason to be offended with *Ichabod Cheney*, for his injurious Charge against them, in representing the Cause of his Suspension to have been, that he esteemed his Pastor erroneous in his Principles, as exhibited to the Church in his Charge, *March 10. 1743, 4*, and which Errors he professed himself, in said Charge, to have collected from a Sermon of Mr. *Balch's* in print, and from his private Conversation. When (as appears by the Votes of the Church) the true Reason of his Suspension, was his disorderly speaking in the House of GOD, on the Lord's Day *Feb. 27. 1743, 4* Afternoon, and saying, the Doctrine preached that Day was false and tended to lead Souls to Destruction : And also for exhibiting said Charge against his Pastor before the Church, without taking the necessary private, previous Steps.

II. It is the Opinion of this Council, that this Church had Reason to be offended with *James Baily*, *Thomas Merril* and his Wife, *Jonathan Hale*, and *Jonathan Hopkinson*, for putting Evidence into the Hands of *Ichabod Cheney* of what is said to have been

been spoken by the Pastor in private, offensive to them, to enable him to bring a Charge of erroneous Principles against his said Pastor, instead of proceeding with him by the Gospel-Rule in *Mat.* 18.

But it doth not appear to this Council, that in offering their Testimonies to the Church in said *Cheney's* Case, it was their Design to exhibit a Charge against their Pastor.

III. Furthermore, it is the Opinion of this Council, that they have nothing to do, to consider any Articles of Charge alledged against the Pastor of this Church, but such as, being pretended to be supported by Evidences, the Church acted upon.

IV. Upon Consideration of the aforesaid several Articles of Error charged upon the Pastor, the Council are of Opinion, this Church is to be justified in declaring by their Vote, that they are not at all hurt in their Charity towards him ; Inasmuch as the Council judge, some of the Articles charged upon him as Errors, are undoubted Truths ; that others are so as he hath explained them, (which Explanation they think they ought to admit, considering the great Distance of Time since the Words were said to be spoken ;) and the Rest are such as by no Means ought to deprive Christians of one another's Charity.

And now, Brethren, we earnestly recommend to you a religious Concern to maintain the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace. We intreat you to be sensible of the sad Influence of Contention, to render the Means of Grace amongst you unsuccessful, and to seek and maintain that Charity which hopeth all Things, and believeth all Things ; and a Temper to forgive Injuries, real or supposed.

May it be the Care of your Pastor to give no Offence, that the Ministry be not blamed ; and may the Brethren of the Church, both with Respect to him, and one another, be ready to put upon Things the most favourable Construction.

Finally Brethren, farewell, be perfect ; be of good Comfort ; be of one Mind ; live in Peace ; and the GOD of Love and Peace shall be with you.

John Barnard, Moderator.

In the Name of the Council.

A true Copy.

Joseph Parsons
Scribe to the Council.

Mr. Balch's Answer to the Articles of Error alledg'd against him.

THE Ist. Article is, That I have said, " Communion with God consists in receiving Blessings and returning Thanks."

I shall say but little to this, how heinous soever it may appear in some People's Eyes. It seems to me, that if I have taught no more than this of Communion with God, it is more however than those, who find Fault with it, have understood. The Word has been much used in these Times ; but those who have used it most, have seem'd to me to have no Idea to it at all. Upon such Occasions (being willing to instruct the Ignorant, and to promote a rational Religion, in which the Understanding should bear a Part) I have said, Communion with God intends a gracious Intercourse or Commerce between him and his sinful Creatures here on Earth : When God is pleas'd to pour his Blessings upon any, and they make suitable Returns of Love and Gratitude, Praise and Obedience, there is this Communion. Wicked Men have not Communion with God ; because though God bestows Favours upon them, they are not thankful, will not love his Name nor study to please him by obeying his Will ; hence that of the Apostle, *If we say we have Fellowship with him, and walk in Darkness, we lie and do not the Truth*, 1 John 1. 6. God seeks and calls after them, and waits to be gracious, but they fly from him, and desire not the Knowledge of his Ways. On the other Hand, says our blessed Saviour, *If a Man love me, he will keep my Words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him*. Communion with God, according to Mr. Howe, is the Reciprocation of this Love : According to Dr. Manton, it consists in Donatives and Duties, i. e. (if I understand him right) in Gifts and Blessings by God bestowed upon us, and Duties by us performed to him. When God by his Spirit accompanying the Word, enlightens, sanctifies, and comforts the Believer ; and the Believer in Return, fears, loves, and rejoices in God, and sets himself to serve and honour him by a faithful and zealous Discharge of his Duty ; such an one may be said to walk with God, or to lead a Life of holy Communion and Fellowship

lowship with him. And oh ! would to God we all knew more of this practically and experimentally. But why should any dishonour themselves, and betray their own Ignorance, to find Matter of Accusation against me ? I can truly say, I've offered nothing upon this, or any other of the Heads complained of, but with a View to the Instruction of those with whom I have conversed. And if I have failed of Success, and of giving Satisfaction ; this has not been owing to Want of good Will, and true Pains taken by me ; but must be imputed either to my Weakness, or their Prejudices.

II. The next Thing I am charged with, is saying, " That there was no Need of applying the Blood of Christ for our Cleansing."

The utmost Occasion I ever gave for which foul Aspersions, was only this, that apprehending one speaking of the Blood of Christ, to take it in the gross literal Sense, I told him, he did not seem to understand himself; it was not the material Blood of Christ taken in that gross Sense, that would cleanse the Heart or purge away Sin ; that by the Blood of Christ, when used in such a Manner, we were to understand the Vertue and Merit of his Death, and the Efficacy of that pure and holy Doctrine, which he ratified thereby. And I can chearfully appeal to my constant Hearers, and to all that know me, whether it is possible that this Article should be true in any other Sense. It never enter'd into my Heart. I know that there is no other Name given under Heaven among Men, but the Name of Christ, whereby we must or can be saved. And that if any reject the Atonement and Propitiation made by his Blood, sinning wilfully after they have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins, but a certain fearful Looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries. It has been sometimes objected as a Matter of Reproach to me, that being ask'd of my Principles, I profess myself a Christian. But would my Enemies also make this my Glorifying void ? I trust in God that they shall never be able to do it. I am not of *Paul*, I am not of *Apollos*, I am not of *Cephas* ; but for any to say of me, that I am not of Christ, is to endeavour to deprive me of that, which is the only Thing in my Character, I am very fond of. I have neither Master nor Father on Earth, but one I profess to be my Master in Heaven, whose Word shall ever engage my Faith, his Command my Obedience, and his Will my most ready Submission.

I know that I am happy so far as I am wrought into the Temper and Likeness of Christ's Gospel; and that it is not in the Power of Earth or Hell to deprive me of this.

III. Another Thing I am charg'd with saying is, "That *Paul* was a good Man before he was converted as he went to *Damascus*, and that *that* Conversion was only from Judaism to Christianity."

As to which, I shall very freely declare what Grounds I go upon when I imagine, that he, who was afterwards the Apostle *Paul*, might be a good Man before he was converted as he went to *Damascus*. I take it as a Favour, that I was not represented as believing he was a good Man before he was converted at all. But that he was a good Man before *that* Conversion, and that *that* Conversion was only from Judaism to Christianity, I have this to offer; that the Testimony and Character he gave of himself, respecting that Time, after he was not only a good Man, but an inspired Apostle, must be look'd upon as very singular and extraordinary, supposing he was a bad Man; for he says of himself that *he lived in all good Conscience before God*, Acts 23. 1. *That touching the Righteousness which is in the Law, he was blameless*, Phil. 3. 6. *And that he profited in the Jews Religion above many*, Gal. 1. 14. Now can it be supposed, that there were no good Men in the *Jewish* Church at that Time? And if there were any, who more likely than one that lived in all good Conscience before GOD? And who was not only blameless, but excell'd in all the Righteousness and Religion of the *Jews*? For it is to be observ'd, he said these Things of himself, not when he was a self-righteous Pharisee, but long after he was become an humble and zealous Christian. — But you will say, how could he be a good Man at that Time, when he had not the Knowledge of Christ? I answer, it does not appear that he did not believe in a Messias to come; which was Part of the *Jewish* Religion, wherein he profited above many. And if you only mean, that he did not know, or then believe, that Jesus was the Christ; I answer, this was the Case of *Nathanael* when he was certainly a good Man, for our Saviour himself gave him the Character of an *Israelite indeed, in whom was no Guile*. It was also the Case of *Cornelius*, when yet he had a Testimony from Heaven, that *his Prayers and Alms came up for a Memorial before GOD*, Acts 10. — But you will say, *Paul* was a Persecutor. I answer, 'tis true he persecuted the Church; a very grievous Crime, and was ever after disposed not only

only to acknowledge, but aggravate the same; and yet he tells us, not only in one Place, that *he did it ignorantly*; but in another, *he verily tho't with himself*, he ought to do as he did, and that it proceeded from his Zeal for the Religion he was educated in. Now, is it impossible that a good Man in these Circumstances, under a false and mistaken Notion of Things, should ever have a Hand, in a Criminal Persecution? It can't be equal (it seems to me) in such Circumstances, to *David's* Adultery and Murder. And yet after all, I have not any Zeal to expend in this Affair: I am willing that every one should think for himself. For let Fundamentals in Religion be ever so multiplied, yet I think this can't be fairly brought in, on one Side or the other. Nor should I ever have mentioned it in Conversation, had I not thought there had been Occasion. This Instance of *Paul's* Conversion, with some others, have been produc'd in these Times, to warrant Things of a very extraordinary Nature. Upon such Occasions, I've said, that many of the Conversions we read of in the New-Testament, were only from Judaism to Christianity; and this among other has no Doubt been mentioned, as a Change from one Religion or Profession to another. Whereas (I have added) what we mean by Conversion now, is quite another Thing; a Change from Sin to Holiness, a Man's *ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well*; a wicked Man's *forsaking his Way and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and turning to God*. And I have said, it was unfair to argue from Conversions of one of these Kinds to those of the other; and in particular, that unless we were more certain that *Paul's* was really a Conversion from Sin to God, (I mean from the reigning Power and Dominion of Sin) it ought not to be brought to vouch for any such sudden Changes, as may now-a-days be pretended to, by Visions, Trances, or the like. But 'tis Pity that this, with some other of these Matters, should take up much of your Time; I therefore dismiss it, and pass to the next Head, which is of more Importance.

IV. The fourth Particular is, that I have said, "Wherever the Gospel is read or preach'd, there is a Sufficiency of the Spirit, afforded to make it effectual to Salvation." My Answer as to this is, That the Gospel is stiled *the Ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. 2. 8. And *the Power of God to Salvation to every one that believeth*, Rom. 1. 16. And inasmuch as wicked Men are charg'd with resisting the Holy Spirit under the former Dispensation (as by St. Stephen, who tells the Jews, Acts 7. 51. *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in Heart and Ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your Fathers did so do ye*; implying that the Holy Ghost had

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been

been from Age to Age striving with that rebellious People,) we may conclude that this is much more the Case of wicked Men under the Gospel; and that the Reason why they are not converted, is, not because God does not send his Spirit to strive with them, but because they resist his Motions, counter-strive, and rebel against the Light and Grace offer'd, and in some Measure afforded to them. It is not pretended that wicked Men have in fact all that Grace given them that good Men have; but that the Reason why they have it not, is because they resist, refuse, or receive in vain the Grace first given: It is not pretended, that God affords at once Grace enough for any Man to go thro', and accomplish the whole Work of his Salvation, or to do every thing that may be necessary to his eternal Happiness; but that so much is given, as may be sufficient to what is *nextly* and *immediately* required of him; on a Man's improving of which, he may from the divine Goodness hope for more, according to his future Needs: Agreeable to that of our Saviour several Times repeated in the New Testament, that *to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more Abundance*. It is not pretended, that we have any Sufficiency of our own: The Grace of God is acknowledg'd in every Thing, and the Necessity of his special Grace to all the Purposes of Regeneration, Conversion, Sanctification, Perseverance, and eternal Glory; in every Step of which, the rich and free Grace of God is held to be most conspicuous and adorable. But this I believe, that tho' we are not sufficient of our selves to think any Thing as of our selves, yet we have a Sufficiency of God; and that there is not the least Defect in the Provision God has made for the Salvation of Sinners under the Gospel. To say that the Gospel Salvation is insufficient, is not only to contradict the Apostle, who affirms that *Grace abounds and reigns* in the Gospel Dispensation: But it is also (in my Opinion) to charge God with Foolishness, in not having calculated and proportion'd the Means to the End; and with Unrighteousness too, in that he will punish and aggravate the Condemnation of wicked Men for their having abused Gospel-Light and Grace, when yet it was never accompanied with a Sufficiency of the Spirit to make it effectual to their Salvation. Let those who can bear such Consequences, maintain the Opinion: for my own part, I believe, that God's Commandments are not greivous, much less impossible; and that Christ's Yoke is easy and his Burden light; which it cou'd never be said to be, if there was not a Sufficiency of the Spirit afforded to enable Men to do what he requires of them. Tho' without Christ we can do nothing, yet thro' Christ strengthening us, I believe, we may do all Things, that are required, and
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made the Conditions of our Happiness. Upon this Principle, I warn Men not to grieve the Holy Spirit ; not to receive the Grace of God in vain ; not to despise so great Salvation as by the Gospel we are favoured with ; and charge the Ruin and Misery of wicked Men upon themselves. I believe that God is good, and that he has no Pleasure in the Death of Sinners ; but has done to prevent it, whatever became a wife, and righteous, and merciful Father, and Governour, to do. I believe that if any Man is sensible of his Need of divine Grace and Wisdom, and asks it of God, disposed to improve it for his Glory, and his own & others Good, it shall be given him of that God who giveth to all Men liberally and upbraideth not ; and that if earthly Parents, who are evil, are yet inclin'd to help and befriend their Children in such Instances as they are able, much more will our heavenly Father, whose Tho'ts and Ways of Mercy and Goodness are not as ours, but exceed them, as the Heavens are high above the Earth ; much more, I say, will our heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. I believe that God will be clear and innocent when he judges ; and that in the last Day it will be known, whether Sinners perish from any Defect in the Goodness of God, and in the Provision he has made thro' Christ for their Recovery, or, from their own chosen, wilful Wickedness and Folly, in neglecting to use the Means and Helps, and to improve the Advantages and Assistances, which by the Gospel were afforded to them. And this, as near as I can remember, is the Substance of what I have been won't to say upon this Subject, and must have occasioned the present Article. And now I appeal to all, and submit it to your own Understandings and Consciences, whether this is not right, according to the Knowledge you have of the Scriptures ; and what your own Reason and the Light of Nature teaches you of God ; who cannot do an unwise, an unrighteous, or an unkind Thing ; and therefore can never be suppos'd to have contriv'd the Gospel (which is celebrated as the highest Instance of his Goodness and Grace to fallen Man) only to increase and aggravate the Misery and Damnation of his Creatures, without so much as having ever design'd, it should be sufficient to their Salvation ; which he could not but know, it would never serve, unless accompanied with a Sufficiency of his Spirit, so that if what was given, was improv'd, his Grace should be finally victorious.

V. The next Particular is, " And that it was only the practical Part that was wanting to make Men happy." This seems to have been design'd in Connection with the former ; but so far as I have any Notion about it, what might occasion it was this,

that speaking of the Itinerancy of Mr. *Whitefield*, *Tennent*, and others, I have said, that if when they went about the Country, they had called upon Men to fear GOD, and love one another, and to live holily, soberly, righteously, peaceably, and godlily, in the World ; they might have done a great deal of good, (equivalent to what I told Mr. *Tennent* himself) but as they had stirred up a great deal of Strife and Contention about Speculations and Forms, this I tho't, was a great Balance to the good they had done, if any : For (said I) as to *Form* we were well enough before they came ; it was *Practice* that was wanting to make us a happy People. And this, I think, was very agreeable to that of our Saviour, which I had in my Eye at the same Time, Joh. 13. 17. *If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them.* That I ever said, Practice was all that was wanting, where Knowledge and Faith are wanting as much as Practice, I think is not true ; and I appeal to all that know me, if I have not constantly affirm'd both in my public Ministry and private Conversation, that without Knowledge the Heart could not be good, and that, without Faith in the Christian Revelation (in my Opinion) there was no solid Foundation laid, for a truly vertuous and excellent Life. If this Article is taken in Conjunction with the former then my Meaning must have been, that Men do not fail of Happiness from any Unwillingness in God to afford his Spirit and Grace to them, but from their own not improving, or as the Scripture expresses it, *receiving in vain*, the Grace given them.

VI. The next Article is a Passage taken from a Sermon I preached about three Years ago ; when, speaking of the young Man that came to our Saviour, and ask'd him, *what he should do that he might have eternal Life ?* I say “ that our Lord saw no ill Intention in him at this Time, nor suspected any.” This is supposed to be a very grievous and dangerous Error ; but for my own Part, I must needs say, I cannot see it. I thank God that in a Course of three Years constant Preaching since that Time, my Eagle-ey'd Enemies have not been able to fix upon any Thing worse than this. Had I represented this young Man as a self-righteous Pharisee, and as coming to our Saviour with the Devil in his Heart, and a Lie in his Mouth ; notwithstanding that the Evangelist observes, *then Jesus beholding him loved him*, Mar. 10. 21. this would have pleased some People : But I am not of the Opinion that this was the Case. I believe on the contrary, that he came to our Saviour as free from any ill Design as a poor imperfect Creature can well be suppos'd to be in any Affair ; and if so, I think I might say, *Our Lord saw no ill Intention in the young Man*

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at this Time. And if he saw no ill Intention in him, I'm persuaded, our Lord was endu'd with that Charity that *thinketh no Evil*, where it seeth none, and so I might add, *Nor did he suspect any.* But I hasten to the next Thing which is of more Importance; however I cannot but remark, that by the Interspersion of several such Trifles as this, it may be easily seen, that no Stone is to be left unturned, and that the old Maxim in such Cases is closely adhered to, *Throw Dirt stoutly, and some will stick.*

VII. The next Thing I am charg'd with saying is, "That Man by Nature is more inclined to Vertue than Vice." This I own is bad enough, supposing the word *Nature* was here to be taken according to common and vulgar Use; but what if the Case was this? As I can truly say, as near as I can remember, it was: I had observ'd Nature loaded with a great Deal of unjust Disgrace, and the God and Author of Nature, as I thought, very unjustly reflected upon thereby. This led me to take Notice, that though we commonly use the Word *Nature* in a bad Sense, yet it is oftener in Scripture used in a good one; as particularly, Rom. 2. 14. *For when the Gentiles which had not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law:* Here said I *Nature* prompted the Heathen to be sober, just, merciful, faithful, &c. And what are we to understand by *Nature*? Why *Reason* and *Conscience*; which are a Part of our Nature as much as our Appetites and Passions are. If then you will take the Word *Nature* as we are obliged to do in this Place and several others, I may well enough say, "that by Nature we are more inclin'd to Vertue than Vice; for Reason and Conscience, said I, are always on the Side of Virtue, and never dispose Men to Vice and Wickedness. That I could not be reasonably thought to mean it of Men's *Appetites* and *Passions*, is evident, because I have always profess'd to believe with the Apostle *James*, that these are perpetually enticing and drawing us away to Evil. But then I hold at the same Time, that God has given Men *Reason* and *Conscience* to be a Ballance to their *Appetites* and *Passions*, and to teach them how to use and govern them. And that I should sometimes use the Word *Nature*, as it is several Times used in Scripture, I think can be accounted no great Fault, on Supposition that I have sufficiently explained myself; which, whether I have not done it to the Understanding and Satisfaction of all, excepting a very few (whose Eyes the Glare of New-Light has blinded) I shall leave it with those, who know me best, to say. For none of these Things have been said in a Corner; my Talk has been uniform in all Companies and upon all Occasions. No Body can ever imagine,
that

that I should chuse out my worst Enemies to say the most exceptionable and suspicious Things before. My People very well remember, that when forty or fifty of them have been together, and they could generally understand me well enough, and perceive the Truth and Reasonableness of what I offer'd ; yet a few, would be ever and anon starting and catching at some Thing, as if it was very bad and erroneous ; and wondring that others could not see it, as well as they. I solemnly declare, I don't know that I have ever said any Thing before any of these People, but what I should have been heartily glad the whole Church or the whole Congregation might have heard. It is now more than a Year ago that I complain'd to the Church of *Abuse*, with Respect to what I said before them. And desired the Church to appoint a Number of the Brethren to attend me at such Times, when any of them expected to talk with me. The Church accordingly comply'd with my Request. And the Brethren came several Times, but not one of them ever appear'd ; no, there would be too many Witnesses against them, if they attempted to make any Thing bad out of what I said, And 'tis well known, that no Man can so guard his Discourse, but that those who are disaffected and prejudic'd may turn some Things to an ill Sense. I have always acknowledged and bewailed the very great Corruption and Degeneracy of Mankind, and if I had been more insensible of it before, yet my own Experience only in these Times must have left a very considerable Conviction of that Nature upon my Mind. But I must not enlarge.

VIII. The next Thing is, that I have said, "Morality is the Height of Christianity." As to this I scarce need to inform any understanding Person, that I cou'd never mean, as if it was the utmost Aim of the Gospel to bring Men to *trade* and *deal fairly* ; which is what some People may call *Morality* ; for tho' I look upon this as a very considerable Thing, and wonder with what Face Men can run down Morality, who have only this View of it ; yet I believe this to be far short of what the Gospel aims at, and would bring Men to. Much less cou'd I be supposed to mean, as if a fair outside show, without any Principle of Goodness within, was the perfection of a Christian State. All that know me are Witnesses, that this is what I never call *Morality* : I give this it's proper Name, and call it *Hypocrisy*, meer *Paint* and *Varnish*, an *empty dead Carcase*, loathsome to God, and the Abhorrence of all good Men. I have constantly asserted, that there is not the least Morality in the fairest outside Show that ever Man made, if his Heart is not as his Practice. Morality with me, essentially refers to the inward Principles

ciples from which a Man acts ; and includes in it, the Love of God, and the Love of his Neighbour. This is what our Saviour sums it up in ; and of Morality in this View of it, he says, it was the *Law* and the *Prophets*, i. e. it was the Substance, the Height and Perfection of that Religion which God formerly taught the Jews. And what does the Apostle *Paul* say of the very same thing, as it respects the Gospel ? Why he says, it is *the End of the Commandment*, i. e. it is the great Drift and Aim of the evangelical Dispensation now, as it was formerly of the Jewish. It ever was & ever will be, the great End and Design of all Religion, to bring Men to reverence their Maker, the great Ruler & Judge of the World ; and to love one another : to bring Men to submit themselves to God, to love Truth and Virtue, to purify them from all moral Imperfection, and to inspire them with the Love of Holiness. This is that good Thing which God shewed to his People formerly, as what all his Precepts centred in, that they would *do justly, love Mercy, and walk humbly with him* ; and it is expressly declared to be the End of our Saviour's appearing, to destroy the Works of the Devil, to redeem Men from all Iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. So that this is so far from being an Error, in the most proper Sense of the Word, that indeed it is the truest and best Description that can be given of Christianity ; it is the End of all Faith and all Knowledge to bring Men to be moral Men, i. e. to resemble God, the most perfect of all moral Beings ; to bring them to imitate his moral Perfections ; and to be like him in Truth, Holiness, Righteousness, Goodness, and the like : or in other Words, and as the Scripture expresses it, *to make them Partakers of the Divine Nature*, and to enable them *to escape the Corruption that is in the World through Lust*.

The two remaining Articles are so perfectly trifling, that I am ashamed to mention them. The first is, that I have said, " A certain Verse in the Bible is mistranslated." And what then ? Can our young Divines dispute the Matter with me ? Can they show me I am wrong ? Or will they go to somebody else and ask him ? And supposing they shou'd, & he should tell 'em, it was, or was not ; will they be ever the wiser ? Can they tell whether he imposes upon them or no ? But possibly it may be tho't a Crime to say, that any Place in the Bible is not rightly translated. I answer, if it be, there is scarce any Man of Learning that has writ since the Translation was made, but what has committed it. However, I acknowledge the Translation we have, to be good in general ; and believe, there is no Danger of a sincere, honest,

honest, and humble Enquirer after Truth, his being led by it into any Mistake that is very material: Yet nevertheless I freely declare, that I dislike the Expression in the 51 Ps. 5. *Shapen in Iniquity*, because we don't shape ourselves, neither do our Parents do it; but it is the immediate, sole Work of God, (as you may see 139 Ps. 14, 15, 16 Verses) and it seems to intimate as if God made us *Sinners*, whereas every Thing he makes is just as it should be; and it is we who corrupt and marr his Workmanship, Eccl. 7. 29. *Lo this only have I found that God made Man upright, but they have sought out many Inventions.* I should therefore have chosen the Word *Born* or *brought forth*, as it is several Times rendered elsewhere.

The last Thing I am charg'd with saying is, "That a wicked Man cou'd know as much of the Things of another World as a good Man could." And what then? Have I in supposing this, gone beyond the Apostle *Paul*, who plainly supposes, that a wicked Man, a Man without Charity, may understand *all Mysteries, and all Knowledge*, 1 Cor. 13. 2. Can a good Man know more? I didn't say, that a wicked Man was as much affected, and made as good a Use of his Knowledge; or that he was as much under an Awe of God, and a practical Influence of the Things of another World; this is not so much as pretended; but that he could know as much; and why not? Do we know any Thing of another World, but what God has revealed in Scripture? And if an unregenerate Man has good natural Parts, and has had suitable Advantages in his Education, may he not know as much of what is revealed in Scripture, of the meer Contents of the Bible, as a good Man of lower Abilities and fewer Advantages? I acknowledge, if all other Things were equal, the good Man would have the Advantage: But Parts and Learning are not always the Property of the Godly. And therefore, unless my Accusers shall have Recourse to Visions and Trances, (which I tho't had been quite exploded) and maintain, that they are what none but good Men are favour'd with, I don't see but that this, which is complain'd of as an Error, must be acknowledged an undoubted Truth. And, if I could stoop so low, I might mention some of their own great Prophets, who have said as much. But I am weary, and believe you are also too, and willing I should close.

I submit these Things, (my Christian Friends and Brethren) to your calm, and sober Consideration. I have very freely deliver'd my Sentiments; and if they will stand the Test of Scripture, well; if not, I am as freely willing to give any one of them up, as ever I was to espouse it.

I conclude with this hearty Wish, that none of us may have Pleasure in Unrighteousness; but that we may every one receive the Love of the Truth, that we may be saved.

And now, the Lord give us Understanding and Wisdom, according as we need, to direct our Way.

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